

Welcome home, OAKLAND Raiders

Fort Worth Term

FRI JUN 23 1995

OAKLAND is humming an old tune with a new meaning: "Happy Days Are Here Again." Al Davis is bringing the Oakland Raiders home. *Economics*

That's right. They're coming home. The Oakland Raiders. Some of us never called them anything else, even when they played in that polluted place down south.

When the word began to spread that this time it might be true, that our guys were really coming back, the pulse of the city quickened.

Throughout Oakland and the entire East Bay, faces brightened. Could it be true?

We waited, as another kind of team did its work.

This was the off-field team that carried the deal through political and economic defensive lines as menacing as those confronted on a football field. Super Bowl-tough, this team never gave up.

Sharing the Most Valuable Player spot would have to be George Vukasin, president of the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum Board of Directors, and Ed De Silva, a member of the board.

For almost 14 years, Vukasin has kept hope alive that the Raiders would come back to Oakland, if only we could put the right deal together. He must have been discouraged much of the time. But he plugged away.

De Silva was not as visible, but his work behind the scenes in talks with Raiders owner Al Davis made the move happen.

Still, the two men could not have done it alone. It took a whole team to win this one. And let's not forget fans. No one was second string.

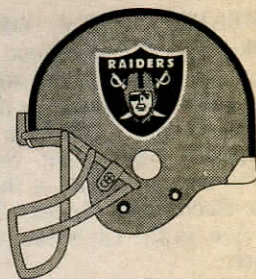
The city of Oakland's main player was Councilman Ignacio De La Fuente, who moved between the city and county artfully

to help the deal jell. Sometimes that meant sticking his political neck way out there. Never mind, he did it.

The city's staff person, Ezra Rapoport, Oakland deputy city manager, crunched numbers and worked creatively with the rest of the team.

Jack Brooks is a lesser known but pivotal player. Brooks is a minority partner of the Oakland Raiders corporate structure whose contributions were critical to making the deal work.

Although he is no longer on the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Don Perata was always a steadfast, never-give-up booster.



Fly a yellow ribbon. Shout for joy. Honk your horn. Dig out that old Oakland Raiders sweatshirt. Celebrate the silver and black.

It's tough to single out just a few of the star players, because there were many more people involved working their hearts out on this deal. We salute them for their untiring dedication to getting the job done.

When finally the news was real, when it was certain the deal was done, a bright cloud made up of equal parts exuberance and relief wafted though the Bay Area.

It was as though our Raiders had been held hostage in Los Angeles, and finally were being released.

Fly a yellow ribbon. Shout for joy. Honk your horn. Dig out that old Oakland Raiders sweatshirt. Celebrate the silver and black.

It sure feels good to have the Oakland Raiders home again.

Oakland and all of Alameda County owe thanks to everyone who made it happen.

We tip our Oakland Raiders helmet to all of you!

Raiders return should be a big psychological boost for the city of Oakland

FOOTBALL TEAM

MON JUN 26 1995

OAKLAND RAIDERS

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

If the extra \$5 million found somewhere was a minor miracle for the city of Oakland's new budget, the return of the Raiders football team is a miracle of Biblical proportions.

The frenzy in town over the Silver-and-Black coming home has mostly been otherworldly. Its greatest benefit could very well be psychological more than economic.

Even more than it did five years ago, when the team almost came back, Oakland now really needs a "win." The city's economy hasn't improved. Its self-esteem may have worsened.

The City Council just completed yet another depressing round of budget cuts, affecting about 70 jobs. Funding for the touted academy programs in the Oakland public schools and for arts and cultural groups was sliced significantly.

Now, there's hope in the form of a professional football team that gained a national reputation for ruggedness, right here in blue-collar Oakland. In its 22 seasons in the East Bay's biggest city, the Raiders brought "pride and poise" and a "commitment to excellence."

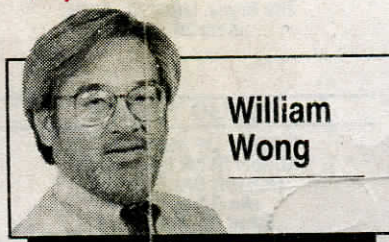
The Raiders helped many Oaklanders feel good about themselves and their city. The team was also revered by East Bay residents who live in cities like San Leandro, Alameda, Castro Valley, Hayward, Fremont and in the Tri-Valley, and even as far away as the Central Valley.

An economic booster?

It's debatable whether the Raiders' return will add greatly to the city's and region's overall economy. Certain businesses will undoubtedly benefit, those around the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum and some sports bars and memorabilia shops.

Some economists argue persuasively that the money to be spent on the Raiders wouldn't be spent on other pursuits.

Beyond immediate dollars and cents, however, the team's homecoming should help generate a posi-



William Wong

tive rippling effect in the longer term in the city's economy. The psychological boost the city is getting should make it easier for officials here to attract new businesses and retain ones that are thinking about leaving.

Given the relatively sorry state of the city's economy, the officials need all the help they can get, and they just got one of the greatest liftoffs in recent memory.

Redevelopment budget

Moreover, Oakland getting the Raiders back could also have beneficial effects on the city's sagging redevelopment budget. This budget is made up of increased property tax revenue generated by the higher property valuations brought about through redevelopment projects.

The main redevelopment district in Oakland is downtown, but there are others, including one that's in the works for the Coliseum area.

If city officials leverage the Raiders' return to bring in more employers to the downtown district and elsewhere, the sharp decline in the Redevelopment Agency's budget could start an upward turn, thus perhaps restoring funding for the school academies and for arts groups, among other recipients.

The deal proposed between the Raiders and the three-headed government monster (city, Alameda County, and the Coliseum) appears to be taxpayer-safe.

What torpedoed the 1990 deal was a "guarantee" of more than \$600 million to Raiders owner Al Davis. If that amount couldn't be raised through ticket sales, then city and county taxpayers would have been required to come to the rescue.

Critics of that provision, including Oakland attorney Frank Russo and Natalie Bayton, currently an Oakland City Councilmember and then an aide to council member Wilson Riles Jr., led a petition campaign to stop the deal.

Another factor in the public's negative response then was the secret process by which public officials arrived at the agreement with Davis.

The politicians, we hope, have learned the hard lessons from the debacle of 1990. Apparently, they have, but they must still study the details of the deal so taxpayers won't be obligated without their knowledge.

A personal note: I was among the first Oakland Raiders fans, having lugged my own six-pack into the quaint Frank Youell Field where Laney College now sits. The splintered wooden benches were a far cry from the armchairs of the Coliseum, but when you were young and innocent and you could see a new football team in the National Football League grow, it was heavenly.

And the legend grew

Then Al Davis took over the team and made it a winner, and the legend grew, thanks to players like Ken Stabler, Clarence Davis, Fred Biletnikoff, Jack Tatum, Jim Otto, and George Blanda. Tickets for games in the new Coliseum stadium became impossible to get.

Suddenly, Davis jilted Raiders fans big time, taking his team south. Since then, hard-core Raider fans here have pined for the return of "their" team.

I'm no longer a hard-core Raiders fan but am pleased they're coming back, if for no other reason than to hope along with many other people here that the team will restore some good feelings that can later translate into genuine economic growth.

William Wong's column appears in The Oakland Tribune on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.